

The Altenburg Case

By GEORGE DYRE ELDRIDGE

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By George Dyre Eldridge
(Continued from Page 14)

"Wouldn't take it?" asked Beckwith, frankly. Then he hastened to add, for appearance sake, "Of course, there are lawyers of ability, but it doesn't run in the line you need."

"Well," asked Calden, after a few minutes' pause. Beckwith's apology seemed to him a weakness to be treated with tender silence.

"Or, I thought I'd make the matter plain. I must decline to act further in this affair."

"I suppose you're right," said Calden, wearily, "but I should think even this rule might have its exceptions."

"The trouble is you've got one rule in mind while I'm thinking of another. You think it's simply the rule that a lawyer must be told everything. The rule I deem important is that a lawyer must do his best for his client."

"You simply make that a habit," said Calden, "and you've got to do it from start to finish. Calden began, only to be interrupted with:

"But you haven't told me all you know."

"What I haven't told you, if I haven't told all, isn't mine to tell," said Calden, coldly.

"Look here, Calden," exclaimed Beckwith, shaping a last plea. "I'm fool enough to like you or I wouldn't be wasting time this way. You've got yourself to think of. You can't get the job any too quick."

"You think Trafford suspects me?"

"If 'twas any other man but Trafford had the job I'd be surprised you're not already arrested."

"Well," replied Calden, his face pale, but with no sign of fear that Beckwith could discover, "when he's ready to let me go, I shan't deny the charge."

"What!" exclaimed Beckwith. "You surely won't admit it?"

"I'll stand silent and put them to their proof."

Beckwith eyed him keenly for a moment and then said sharply:

"Mr. Calden, you know who committed that murder."

If Beckwith had hoped to surprise Calden into admission he was disappointed. Not a muscle moved or eyelash quivered. His answer was as colorless as before.

"Admit that I did. What difference does that make as long as it wasn't I?"

"You should use the knowledge to save yourself."

"As a lawyer you know that my innocence is presumed. It is my guilt that must be proved before I can be convicted."

"You owe something to justice."

"I do," Calden agreed, solemnly, yet with a ring of eagerness in his voice. "And justice owes something to John Altenburg. Since he's dead, I must assume the debt he owes."

Beckwith leaned his elbow on the mantel and, with his head supported on his hand, seemed to study his companion's mood before speaking again. Then he said, slowly, and as if partly to himself:

"I sometimes think you hated him so that you could have killed him yourself."

"I wish to God I had!" exclaimed Calden, and there was that in his tone that gave even Beckwith a thrill.

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